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Elmfield Training dishes out cash to Morrisons

Chris Henwood
[@chris_henwood](#)

The provider behind the UK's biggest apprenticeship programme has defended handing over taxpayers' cash to the firm whose staff it trains.

Elmfield Training, which was allocated £41m by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) for the current academic year, said it was "only right to share costs" of its programme with Morrisons.

The payments — understood to be £60 for every learner — began after the provider started one-day development sessions on key skills with apprentice staff at the giant supermarket chain, which last financial year had a turnover of £17bn.

"We've always supported Morrisons learners one-to-one with key skills, and last year we decided to add a one-day development day with

groups of learners," said a spokesperson for Elmfield, which claims to have delivered around 100,000 apprenticeships for Morrisons since October 2009.

"The extra tuition means that we've been able to maintain high pass rates on both literacy and numeracy."

"For many of our learners in Morrisons, it's the first time anyone has supported them with these skills — and obviously it's had a very positive effect on people's confidence, as well as their ability to perform well at work."

"Morrisons makes a huge financial contribution to the apprenticeship through all the training and support they provide learners. Where additional costs are incurred to improve the quality of the programme, it is only right they are shared fairly, with ourselves as the provider."

Funding rules state provid-

FE Week Exclusive

ers "must not use apprenticeship funding provided by the SFA to pay apprenticeship wage".

However, a Morrisons spokesperson said the company was happy that the payments from Elmfield were above board.

News of the payments system comes just a week after FE Week reported claims that Elmfield was proposing to shed a third of its 600-strong workforce.

Two out of every three of Elmfield staff were warned on October 4 that they could face redundancy, according to a worker who wanted to remain anonymous.

The Elmfield spokesperson described the redundancy figures supplied to FE Week as "inaccurate, selective and misleading".

The proposed job losses follow a national media report that provider

Pearson in Practice had also opened consultation with 300 employees in its IT apprenticeship arm.

The firm's accounts indicate it had more than 3,000 students a year studying in its IT programme and had a turnover of £30.7m.

A Pearson spokesperson told FE Week: "No business can honestly rule out job losses 100 per cent, but there are no timescales or detailed plans and none were set in the recent business review meetings."

"Nothing has been discussed, announced or decided on redundancies, or the closure of our training centres."

He added: "Pearson in Practice holds regular business review meetings with all its staff."

"We endeavour to hold these on a quarterly basis — neither redundancies nor centre closures were discussed."

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[www.feweek.co.uk](#)

Sharp criticism of SFA Code



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Edition 43

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Top Skills Show tweets:

 @angelicabell
@WorldSkillsUK hey! I'm looking forward to it! X

 @jonathonbinns
Team Leader Training for @worldskillsuk these past 2 days has been lovely! Looking forward to #theskillsshow but for now it's #megabus time!

 @jacs1984
After seeing the visuals I must admit I want to go to @worldskillsuk special events! Wonder if I can sneak in the back??

 @TwinGroup
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Access to apprenticeship exemptions

Chris Henwood

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Forty providers are exempt from funding rules that ban introductory apprenticeships where more than 10 per cent of learners are out of work, *FE Week* can reveal.

The 40 were over the limit before its introduction this year and so were told to carry on — although they have been ordered to try to hit the target.

It has also emerged that the De Vere Academy of Hospitality is the only provider given "formal approval" to keep running its access courses with more than 10 per cent unemployed.

The permission, from the Skills Funding Agency and the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), allows the academy to bypass funding rules, which state: "Providers must not recruit more than 10 per cent of their apprenticeship starts on to the access to apprenticeship pathway without the prior agree-

ment of their agency relationship manager."

A spokesperson for NAS said: "The 10 per cent rule on access was introduced with the 2012/13 funding rules, published at the end of May 2012.

"Providers delivering access before the changes did not require approval to deliver above 10 per cent, as no rule applied at that time.

"We can confirm that 40 providers are legitimately exceeding 10 per cent having done so before the introduction of the new rule.

"No further providers have been given formal approval by the agency to deliver above 10 per cent."

She said providers who exceeded the limit before May needed time to change.

"The agency is working with these providers to support transition and ensure new apprentices do not exceed 10 per cent," she added.

De Vere was the only provider that could continue to exceed 10 per cent as it used a new model that attempted "to address a spe-

cific need identified by the sector and using a sector-led solution. As with any new developed initiative it is being closely monitored and assessed."

The full list of the 40 providers is subject to an *FE Week* Freedom of Information request.

The De Vere Academy advertised two access courses on its website earlier this year.

Both were to last seven weeks and included two or three "work trials".

However, funding rules say that learners on these courses should spend most of their time "in a substantive work placement" with the same number of hours "as expected for those on a full apprenticeship".

The De Vere Group has defended its programme saying that it had achieved "outstanding" success rates and was helping to address youth unemployment.

The SFA allocated £9.6m to the De Vere Group, known as the Alternative Hotel Group, for the 2011/12 academic year, according to government figures. It included more than £8m for apprentices aged 16 to 18.

Job losses as provider goes to the wall

Chris Henwood

[@chris_henwood](#)

A national training provider with nearly £2.5m of contracts last year has gone into administration with the loss of 40 jobs.

The move has affected the education of 450 learners handled by Birmingham-based Skillsfinder UK Training.

The firm, set up last year, had contracts with lead providers Total People and Remit. It also dealt with Tribal Education.

Craig Povey and Richard Toone, from national accountancy firm Chantrey Vellacott DFK, have been appointed joint administrators.

Mr Povey said: "Skillsfinder had a number of contracts to deliver training to young people between the ages of 16 and 24 that it subcontracted out to other providers.

"It appears the company's business model failed which has, in turn, had a knock-on effect to other providers all over the country."

He said the administrators were reviewing the company's assets and were talking to providers to try to support the affected trainees.

According to the Skillsfinder website, the original company was created in 2007 as a "learner finder" organisation. It went on to subcontract apprenticeship training services to around 75 organisations across the UK.

A spokesperson for Tribal Education said: "Tribal subcontracted tutor and assessor support for a cohort of learners to Skillsfinder in a number of qualification areas.

"We are now finding alternative support arrangements.

"We have contacted all our learners and their employers to explain the situation, and have reassured them we are working towards finding replacement support.



The SkillsFinder UK Ltd website

"We will be regularly updating our learners on our progress. We aim to ensure that the change won't delay the completion of their apprenticeships."

Remit chief operating officer Steve Yardley said: "As a national training provider we have worked with Skillsfinder to assist them in securing government funding to support their learners."

"Over the coming days and weeks we will be doing everything we can to transfer as many of their learners and appropriate staff to Remit. Our team is now making contact with all learners and is in the process of obtaining all relevant documentation to try to ensure there is minimal disruption to their apprenticeships and employment."

Total People associate director Janice Woolley said: "We had a service level agreement with Skillsfinder for a small cohort of 16 learners linked to one employer."

"The learners still linked to Total People have achieved their level two apprenticeships and are just waiting for their full framework certificate."

"We were informed by Skillsfinder that learners had already progressed on to a level

three programme through a different subcontract arrangement."

A Skills Funding Agency spokesperson said: "We have a duty to ensure learner interests are being protected and are working with Remit and Tribal Education to ensure all learners affected by the closure are being supported in every way possible and are able to continue their learning."

"Remit and Tribal have written to employers and learners to outline the support available and a dedicated helpline number and email address have been set up."

"Both Remit and Tribal are also working with learners that have been made redundant as a result of Skillsfinder going into administration to try to secure alternative employment opportunities, to ensure that apprenticeships can be completed."

Skillsfinder's former director, Neil Harrup, was not available for comment.

Chris Martin, Skillsfinder's quality and development manager, was a director in Luis Michael Training, which delivered apprenticeships in sport. The provider is currently being investigated by the Serious Fraud Office, as previously reported in *FE Week*.

Sharp criticism of the ‘limited flexibility’ in Innovation Code

Chris Henwood

@chris_henwood

Government measures to help colleges respond to local employment and skills needs have lost the “spirit” of the report that called for their introduction, it has been claimed.

The Innovation Code, available for use from April this year, was a key element of recommendations that emerged from the Colleges in their Communities Inquiry last year.

It was chaired by Lady Sharp, the Liberal Democrats’ education spokesperson in the House of Lords.

She described the code as “a funding formula that, subject to proper audit procedures, would allow up to 25 per cent of the adult skills budget to be used to meet local priorities”.

However, Lady Sharp has spoken of her “disappointment” at the way the code has been interpreted by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

“We should have read the small print more carefully . . . what is being proposed, which has now been further developed in the guidance re-

cently issued by the SFA, provides only limited flexibility,” she said in a Lords grand committee debate this month.

The SFA has said it plans to issue fresh guidance on the code.

But frustration over its use in practice is shared at the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and Association of Colleges (AoC), whose director of education policy, Joy Mercer said: “We endorse Lady Sharp’s comments.

“The purpose of her report was to support colleges in responding to the specific requirements of communities — for example, in meeting the needs of tenants’ associations.

“Its implementation as an instrument to help colleges develop qualifications with employers runs against this grain. There is such a plethora of qualifications already available that it is rare not to find one that can be of use.

“That is why take-up has been slow. We would urge BIS and the SFA to return to the original spirit of the Sharp report.”

She added: “We have flagged this as an issue with SFA and are seeking to discuss how the code might be re-balanced in its promotion

to ensure Lady Sharp’s vision can be better recognised — as much as is possible within SFA’s remit.”

NIACE director of policy and impact Mark Ravenhall, said: “The code as written in the final report was much more expansive and inclusive than what has been developed since.

“Our challenge to colleges and to government was to create a system where providers were more accountable to local communities than to government, and had the flexibility to meet community needs.

“The way the code has been developed doesn’t quite achieve that, but it’s still early days.”

The SFA and BIS issued a joint statement on the code. “The development of innovative provision is in the hands of the sector,” it said. “There is no process of approval; it is for FE professionals, working with employers to design and develop the provision that will become the qualifications of tomorrow.

“In the coming weeks, as planned, the agency will issue updated information on how the use of the code can be maximised, which will help share best practice across the sector.”



Lady Sharp, presenting her inquiry at the AoC Conference and Exhibition in November 2012

Review of FE teacher qualifications launched

Chris Henwood

@chris_henwood

Further education leaders have told of their concerns about new proposals for industry teacher training.

A review of teacher qualifications for the FE and skills sector by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) includes 19 proposals aimed at creating a simpler system. It is due in place in September next year.

Among the proposals are three generic and three specialist qualifications, along with qualifications at level seven, including one for continuing professional development.

The review has been welcomed by Jill Stokoe, education policy adviser at the Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

“We are pleased LSIS has reviewed teacher training qualifications for the FE and skills sector, including evaluating and responding to stakeholders’ views,” she said.

“It is particularly helpful that LSIS has recognised the role of FE teachers as both subject specialists and teachers.

“But we are concerned LSIS’s work will be wasted if FE is deregulated and the government revokes the requirement for FE staff to have teaching qualifications.

“We firmly believe that they should have these qualifications so will vigorously argue

the case for them to be retained.”

The University and College Union (UCU) is planning to canvass opinion on the proposals with its own three-hour consultation at its head office in London’s Carlow Street from 11.30am on October 31.

Its general secretary, Sally Hunt, said: “We agree there is a need to review the training qualifications . . . as our members have complained of unnecessary duplication of material within the three existing qualifications.

“We have some concerns about potential changes to the balance of the three elements of the course — content, teaching practice and observation of teaching.”

The proposals within the review, carried out on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), were drawn up between July and September when LSIS met with stakeholders and teacher educators.

LSIS chief executive Rob Wye said: “The importance of this review goes beyond the FE and skills sector.

“The teachers and trainers of tomorrow will help to shape the workforce of tomorrow, so it is vital we hear from everyone who is involved with these qualifications.”

The proposals will be the focus of a host of open events across the country, the first of which took place in Birmingham on October 18.

London hosts the second event on November 8, before another one in Taunton on November 13, then Leeds on November 15 and London again five days later.

The deadline for feedback is Friday, November 26.

Visit www.lsis.org.uk to give feedback on the proposals.

Toni Fazaeli, chief executive at the Institute for Learning, goes into detail on the proposals in an expert piece on page 6.



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Editor's comment

Provider pays

It takes a minute to get your head around a provider paying an employer to train their staff.

Obviously, the government has introduced wage incentives to help persuade small employers to take on apprentices.

However, while providers are paid by the government to deliver training, they are banned from using SFA money to pay apprentice wages.

Former funding agency LSC even felt the need to publish a separate document in 2009, warning of providers making 'employer inducements'.

Costs may well be shared "fairly" with Elmfield and Morrisons, but just how much SFA money has ended up with the supermarket giant?

It is unclear what costs would need sharing, and it is a shame that this arrangement did not come out when both firms were before the BIS Select Committee in March.

It would be interesting to hear what committee members think of this arrangement.

We already knew Morrisons paid nothing for Elmfield's services, but to learn that in fact they get paid raises serious questions about the use of public money.

Nick Linford, editor

Corrections

Tales involving number crunching have been known to send many a journalist running for the hills. So maybe Sudoku sessions in the newsroom would improve maths skills? That is, unless the Sudoku was from our last print edition.

There wasn't a great learning curve with one challenge already filled in and the other was plain impossible with two sixes in a single column. One reader told us: "I initially noticed the second puzzle was complete and then noticed the error in the other — probably down to my keen clerk's eye for typos."

Have you spotted something wrong with this edition of FE Week?

If so, feel free to tell us about it, including the page number and story headline, and explain what the problem is. Email us at news@feweek.co.uk with Corrections in the subject line.

SFA U-turn on performance tables

Holly Welham

@hollywelham

Nearly three months after the Skills Funding Agency was challenged over "mysterious" changes to college performance tables, it has told *FE Week* they will be reversed.

In July, the Association of Colleges (AoC) alerted its members that "high grades" would no longer include a C at GCSE on the success rate data managed by the Information Authority. In the briefing, leaked to *FE Week*, the AoC said the impact on colleges was "significant," in some cases "halving" their high grade profile.

Ofsted has not used the new grade definition when inspecting colleges, re-issuing success rate reports in line with the original classification — A* to C not A* to B.

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA), which published the data, said this month it would re-issue this year's reports to include the original definition.

A spokesperson said: "The agency, from this year, will align the publication of high grade definitions with Ofsted's requirements so that colleges can produce self-assessment reports using the same definition that inspectors will use. The SFA is currently seeking clarification from Ofsted around the definitions to be used in current and future inspection rounds."

Ofsted said inspectors were "required to interpret published data to inform inspection judgments" during college inspections.

"Although a grade C is not a high grade, in the context of further education, a learner who achieves a GCSE A* to C grade is considered to have achieved a positive outcome," said a spokesperson. "Inspectors will also use a wide range of other sources of evidence, including the provider's own in-year performance data, the provider's self-assessment report, previous inspection findings, observations of teaching, training and assessment, and the views of staff, learners and employers."

In their internal briefing, the AoC said that the grade definitions of national diploma level three qualifications had also been changed, as they "now seem to need at least one distinction" to count as a high grade. "Three merits used to count as high grades but don't seem to any more," the briefing explained.

The AoC told members in July that the "mysterious" changes had been made "without consultation" and called on the Information Authority to investigate.

A two-month investigation by the SFA at the request of *FE Week*, found the changes were made on the "recommendation" of the Data Harmonisation Group.

The Information Authority report said the

group was originally established to assist Ofsted and the Learning and Skills Council to have a similar basis for calculating success rates.

"Having proved its usefulness the group has continued to meet, but its remit and lines of accountability need to be clarified," the report said. The report said the chair of the investigation was "concerned" the information authority was not fulfilling its "full remit".

"Because of the need to focus on delivering the Individualised Learner Record specification at a time of substantial change from the Department of Business Innovation and Skills and the Department for Education, and their agencies, there is insufficient resource to offer authoritative guidance on the use of data."

"So much is collected and yet there are not ready to hand analyses of what is going on in the sector. It has to be acknowledged that in the absence of such analysis Ofsted has filled the vacuum and become an excellent repository of analytics."

"The LSIS Observatory is another potential source of expertise and the secretariat has been exploring potential links with it."

"In the new era it also falls to the sector to take ownership of and accountability for its data," said the report.

Comments

Government figures reveal a ten per cent fall in 16-18 apprenticeships for fourth quarter

The Apprenticeship situation will get worse before it gets any better. Largely due to the schools not giving any decent Advice and Guidance and hanging on to students whether it's in their best interest or not.

The SFA/NAS do not intend to do anything about this. As far as they're concerned it's the Providers' problem. Let's see what they say when they are massively underspent over the next two or three years.

Actually it's the poor learners' problem. They are being let down by their schools throughout their school lives and then being let down again at the end when actually they should just be let go, to go onto a decent apprenticeship or FE course. The way the schools are behaving should be made a criminal offence.

Malcolm Today

Provider hits back at 'unfounded claim'

I hope the following line doesn't imply subcontracting of the provision — "This in turn has had a detrimental financial impact on a number of other companies."

Skills Funding Agency rules should ensure lead providers pay within 30 days of receipt from the agency.

Carlton

Elmfield Training 'tells 400' staff their jobs are at risk

What Elmfield has failed to understand is that by doing things this way they are going to unleash assessors on the market place that have seen how Elmfield/Morrisons have conducted themselves in private and I sense they will not hold back on telling/showing people the reality of the contract.

Elmfield needs to have a massive rethink about its 30-day consultation. Treat people fairly.

Annon [sic]

How about a bit of loyalty to the company if you are still working for them? Companies change with the climate.

Job losses were inevitable from the start, as anyone in their right mind knew that the Morrisons contract would not remain that big once the sheer amount of learners had been completed.

I work on the Morrisons contract — it's a question of your integrity as an assessor on how you treat your learners. If you work hard and plan your time, you can spend as long as you want with them. If you're a slacker, that's your downfall.

As for the quality, this was all given the go ahead. There is nothing shady about it. As for the leaks and the whistleblowing — shame on you.

Maybe you need to grow up a bit and come down to reality, this is business after all.

Kelsey

All is not well in the world of training providers

I agree and very well put. It does concern me the cattle college era we are in, as many go to complete a course that is not representative to what jobs are out there and some offer qualifications that offer little value unless they accompany work experience, hence the greatness of apprenticeships. It is very frustrating schools take very little responsibility for NEET targets, employability or enterprise unless it means a financial incentive or extra GCSEs to boost their status.

Philip

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FE Week profile

Maggie Galliers ~ her story

Holly Welham

@hollywelham

The president of the Association of Colleges and principal of Leicester College talks to FE Week

Maggie Galliers describes her August election as president of the Association of Colleges as a privilege.

The principal of Leicester College says that her 15 years' experience at the top has given her a "real understanding" of the challenges that FE faces and "the wonderful things that we have to celebrate".

"I'm reaching the end of my career now and this seemed a really good opportunity to use all the experience that I've gained and the networks that I have among college principals, and to a certain extent at a national level, to help the AoC to really get its message across," she says.

Her first priority is to continue to get the message out that "colleges make a massive difference to individuals, communities and to businesses".

"That's at the heart of what we need to do," she says. "Making sure that people understand what a valuable resource colleges are - and how special they are."

Galliers grew up in Coventry where her parents – who both worked in local government – instilled in her the idea of working in the public sector.

Her dad, who was a superintendent of births, deaths and marriages, and her mum, who worked in rate rebate, taught her the value of making a difference to peoples' lives.

"It's an old-fashioned term I suppose, but they gave me a sense of public service — of the importance of giving something back," says Galliers.

"Not only does the public sector pay a wage, but it also allows you to do something that has a lasting impact."

At 18 she went to the University of Exeter to train as a social worker. But during her studies she began to see education as "the key component of giving people choice" and went on to the University of Warwick to train as a teacher.

Galliers says she saw how empowering education could be and wanted to be part of a sector that helps people "break out of the situations that they're in".

"The more skills and qualifications that people have, the more they understand that there's a world that's broader than the one they've been brought up in," says the mum-of-four.

"More opportunities present themselves and people have more of an ability to take control of their lives."

One of her placements during her teacher training was at a FE college.

It felt like "the right environment", but she became a primary teacher, which allowed her to gain qualified teacher status.

"Today the challenge for colleges is to make sure the curriculum they offer benefits both the individuals who are studying it, but also the needs of employers now and in the future"



After three years she moved into FE, working part-time as a lecturer and teacher for seven years at four institutions in Coventry, including the University of Warwick, while bringing up her children.

In 1985, she joined Tile Hill College in Coventry full-time as a lecturer in social studies and left 11 years later as deputy principal.

One of her proudest achievements at the college was the diploma in counselling that she helped to pioneer. The qualification brought together employers, such as the NHS, which needed staff with good counselling skills, colleges, who delivered the training, and Warwick University, which validated the qualification.

"It was a relatively fresh way of doing things that has stood the test of time," she says.

"Today the challenge for colleges is to make sure that the curriculum they offer benefits both the individuals who are studying it, but also the needs of employers now and in the future."

The diploma was a "huge success" and in 1990 she was asked by the University of Warwick to design an MA in counselling — she was made a fellow of the university for five years while carrying out the work.

She joined Ofsted as a part-time inspector in her final year at Tile Hill. She was the college's nominee for inspections and decided to train as an inspector as it "seemed the best way to understand how inspections worked".

"It helps you to take a more objective view,"

she says. "When you work in a college, you don't always see it with fresh eyes. It allows you to bring fresh eyes to the situation and allow you to understand what kind of judgments are being made and what kind of evidence is being used to inform them.

"It can only create a mutual understanding between colleges and Ofsted that's beneficial."

In 1997 she became the principal of Henley College Coventry. Based in the northeast of the city, an area that she describes as "one of the most deprived in the country", her tenure brought home the impact that a college can make on its local community.

A decade ago Galliers, 60, moved to the East Midlands to become the principal of Leicester College, one of the country's largest with an annual turnover of £55m.

She has taken Leicester College from a satisfactory Ofsted grade to "very good with many outstanding features" and has overseen a £47m regeneration project.

"We've transformed the college during the 10 years that I've been there. We've been able to replace and renew buildings that were at the end of their life. We've worked very hard to get grant support and to use our own resources to invest considerable amount of money in the estate. Now they're fit for another generation," she says.

Galliers has also been working to ensure that "the very diverse needs" of Leicester are met and describes colleges as "the strong backbone of the education sector" when it comes to community cohesion.

"We are very heterogeneous and inclusive. We have gifted and talented high-flyers within the sector, and we have people who have been failed by the system," she says.

"In Leicester, I have a lot of students who have come relatively recently to this country; some from countries where they've never had opportunities to experience education."

"Apart from the hospital, it's probably the most diverse organisation in the city."

"Often in cities people live and work in communities that are like them. But when they come to an FE college, all of those faiths, races, abilities, ages, are together in one place."

It's a personal thing

What's your favourite book?

Any book by Sebastian Faulks

What did you want to be when you were younger?

A nurse

What do you do to switch off from work?

Gardening, sea kayaking and reading

Who, living or dead, would you invite to dinner party?

Aung San Suu Kyi, who has fought to bring democracy to military-ruled Burma

What would your super power be?

To be able to have 36 hours in a day

FE Week Experts

Stop, start, sideways; that's how adults learn

The jobs market of the future will be unrecognisable to most of today's workers — education needs to grasp that to do best by its learners, says David Hughes, chief executive at NIACE.

I've just returned from a fascinating week in Australia where I took part in a major conference on the future of work. I was a guest of the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency — formerly known as Skills Australia — which has three important ambitions that resonate with the challenges we face here.

They are to increase the number of people in work, improve productivity and support employers to utilise the skills of their workforces.

These are familiar ambitions, and the remedies and policies being adopted in Australia are strikingly similar to ours in England; although, interestingly, not necessarily that similar to those in Wales, Scotland or other EU countries.

"Many people I met expected policies in vogue in the UK to become fashionable in Australia"

What was also striking was the expectation of many people that policies in vogue here in the UK will soon become fashionable in Australia — an interesting view born of centuries of colonialism perhaps?

The policy agenda is dominated by discussions on employability, vocational qualifications, funding cuts — which potentially will marginalise those with lower educational achievement — more employer-directed government funding, marketisation of the supply of learning and concerns about the so-called mismatch between what people choose to study and labour market needs.

The conference took place over two days at the Sydney Conference Centre in Darling Harbour. The really stimulating speakers speculated about how work will be organised and what skills people will need over the next 10 to 20 years.

Three issues will stay with me, as well as lots of new contacts and ideas.

The first was that predicting the future is not easy. Many speakers tried, and they provided very thought-provoking presentations, but the overriding impression was that there will be lots of sometimes rapid changes, and that there will be jobs, unimaginable to us today, that will be the norm in 10 years.



Some of the presentations reminded me of a great quote from US economist Dr Barry Asmus, who said: "Economists are pessimists — they've predicted eight of the last three depressions."

The second issue follows on from the first: if the future is so hard to predict then we need to challenge learning policy which is narrowly-focused around technical competencies that are right for today's jobs.

It seems clear to me people need a broader education to be able to adapt to changes in the labour market.

As part of my presentation I suggested that we should be helping people to learn so they can understand the changes happening around them, adapt to those changes and be able to cope with them.

Beyond that we should aspire to support people to manage and lead change rather than simply be subject to the changes. I would question whether this resilience to change comes from some of the more narrow vocational qualifications that are often on offer.

The third issue is the one I was asked to present on — the role of informal learning in workforce development and skills.

Very simply, I suggested that most successful people have learned more through informal learning than formal learning, and that we need to recognise how to support good informal learning for all, both in the workplace and in the community.

I went on to suggest that many negative experiences from school days meant that the only way to encourage people into learning was through informal learning, which tapped into their motivation and which usually would not lead directly and immediately into a clear vocational pathway.

I reinforced this with a description of the non-linear way in which many adults return to learning — it is often stop-start, upwards, downwards, sideways and it might take time to find what they want to learn and to translate that into skills for work.

It is a way of learning that we will all need to develop to help us embrace the unpredictability of the future.

David Hughes, chief executive of NIACE

Our future depends on how we teach FE learners

New FE proposals on teacher training have been formulated by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and are up for consultation. Toni Fazaeli, chief executive at the Institute for Learning (IfL), looks at what a newly-qualified teacher or trainer needs to know.

We welcome the LSIS consultation on qualifications for new teachers and trainers. We especially welcome the consultation period, as there is important work still to do.

We are passionate about high-quality teaching — our object is to promote this through individual professional body membership, and our members firmly believe in teaching and training being at least a level five profession, as evidenced in our recent survey, to which more than 5,000 practitioners responded.

Teaching in FE and skills, like other professions, has clear expectations of standards, and qualifications for entry and early years of practice.

It is a second or parallel career for most practitioners, and their young and adult learners deserve to be taught by dual professionals, proven experts who have recent work experience in their field.

The average age of entry to teaching in FE and skills is around 37 — that's 10 years older than for entrants to school teaching.

Teaching is a profession. To continue attracting high-calibre new entrants it must be, and be seen to be, a step up professionally. Initial training must enjoy public confidence and recognition.

"The proposal to halve the diploma qualification lacks rationale"

Learners expect and deserve expert teaching that makes the best use of their talents, and does not waste their time or commitment. Do the proposals put forwards by LSIS, in line with the Lingfield review, offer the right suite of qualifications? Is the central focus on what is right and best for young and adult learners?

On the plus side, the LSIS proposals convey that it is a given that initial qualifications matter. The new specialist qualification for teaching disabled learners is long overdue — recognition of this is a positive development. Retaining specialist qualifications for teachers of English, maths and ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) is right.

The big question for us all during the consultation period is what do good newly-



qualified teachers or trainers need to understand, know and offer their learners? We will be exploring this — and whether the standards need reviewing — with our members, as well as the next level and more technical questions about qualification design.

It is good that the consultation spans late November when Sir Michael Wilshaw's annual report will be published, as Ofsted's views on the quality of teaching and learning across FE and skills need to inform teacher qualifications. Will the quality of teaching stay the same be acceptable, and might it be essential to consider ramping initial teacher qualifications up rather than down?

When considering developments in our sector, it often helps to look at parallel worlds. A proposal to halve the size and breadth of initial qualifications for doctors, engineers, nurses or schoolteachers would spark a public debate.

The proposal to halve the diploma qualification from 120 to 60 credits — this will include specialist teachers of English, maths, Esol and disabled learners — lacks rationale. Presumably somebody thinks newly qualified teachers are over-skilled and so need half the amount of training? If so, where is the evidence?

FE routinely supports young and adult learners who did not fare well in their initial education, so newly qualified teachers need to be adept at enabling learners to overcome problems and make rapid progress.

There is a danger that reducing initial teacher education for FE and skills will prove a false economy.

Most individuals moving into teaching in FE will have earned more in their original field. While not a focus of the consultation, IfL believes that trainee teachers must be supported through bursaries and grants, as those entering the routes to school teaching are. We agree with LSIS that the economy and society depend on learners in FE being well taught and trained — they are our country's future.

Toni Fazaeli, chief executive of the Institute for Learning

FE Week Experts

Training providers exploited and undervalued

Last week Peter Cobrin's article on the *FE Week* website highlighted that all was not well in the world of training providers. In this second article he considers their claims of exploitation and being undervalued.

Training providers are businesses and need a financial and administrative environment that is sustainable, predictable, consistent, and transparent.

Is this the world in which training providers operate? I think not. We would not allow schools and FE colleges to work with young people under such uncertain financial and administrative pressures — although critics of Education Secretary Michael Gove's reforms suggest this is just what is happening.

I've heard stories from providers whose contractual terms were varied overnight on a like-it-or-lump-it basis, or where contracts were severed without warning with apprentices and employers being told before the provider.

I am not pretending that all providers are perfect, nor that all primes, be they colleges or companies, are rogues. But clearly all is not well, and the responses from David Way, chief executive of the National Apprenticeship Service and Geoff Russell, former chief executive of the Skills Funding Agency, when questioned

at the Select Committee on who is responsible for monitoring the relationships that deliver training, offer no reassurance.

The sharp end of the apprenticeship programme is where training and young person engage — whether it's off-site in a college or training centre, or in the workplace.

The responsibilities of the employer are clear – wages, employment protection, health and safety or holiday pay. Government and authorities make great efforts to court and incentivise new employers. Contrast this with the world of the training provider.

I have been working with one well-regarded IT training company with more than 20 years' successful experience in the highly competitive world of commercial IT training.

Their struggles to penetrate the complexities of the regulatory world of apprenticeships reflect well on their persistence and determination – and very badly on the processes and procedures.

This is wrong. We need new entrants from the commercial training world who bring with them a commercial rigour and a real sense of what defines the quality delivery of training, learned a world where there are no soft landings.

The perception among training providers

is that they operate in a sector where they are undervalued, expendable and easily replaced. Not a recipe for quality.

So where does this leave us?

First, the contractual relationships between training providers and their prime contractor need to be externally evaluated and monitored, and clear procedures and processes put in place for when issues arise.

There needs to be a clear code of practice to cover issues such as the rights of a prime contractor to contact an employer or apprentice over the head of the training provider.

This would eliminate the situation where one prime phoned around employers advising them that their training provider was "in liquidation" – a false allegation. Or, another example, where a prime contacted apprentices advising them that they were being transferred to another provider.

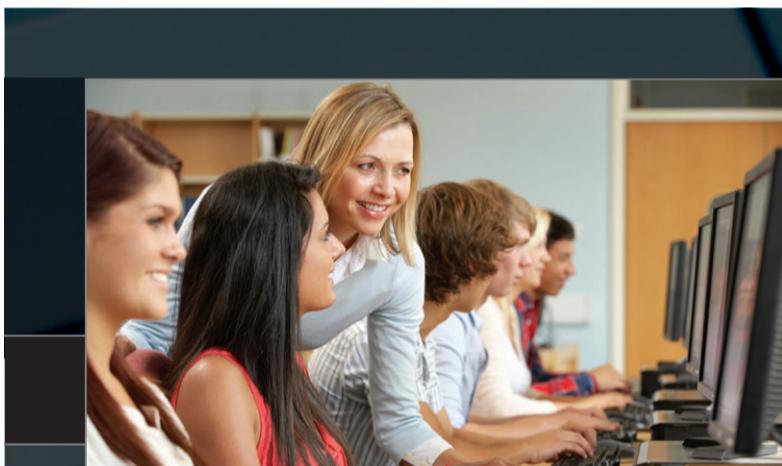
Second, there needs to be a hotline for training providers "in trouble", so that issues don't escalate.

Third, training providers who sub-contract need a clearly defined organisational and representational structure with a coherent voice at the top table.

Now we didn't need a review to reach these conclusions did we?



Peter Cobrin runs the Apprenticeships England Community Interest Company



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FE Week Expert

Warwickshire plans for a rosy future in China



A shared bottle of wine can lead to many things – including the first UK-backed FE college in China. Mariane Cavalli, principal and chief executive of Warwickshire College, explains.

It's an interesting time to be in China, less than a month from the 18th National Party Conference that will elect the new leadership and then select the men (some things in China and the UK are remarkably similar) who will govern the country for the next ten years. The leaders-in-waiting claim that they want to curb economic overheating by focusing on quality not quantity, improving the standards of service industries, and increasing manufacturing industry sustainability. They see the reform of the education system, with a new focus on advanced vocational skills, as the way forward.

The timing is doubly interesting for us as Warwickshire College has established a partnership which led to this week's opening of the first China-UK National Skills College, in Qingzhou City, Shandong Province.

The idea for the college was conceived (and 'was ever thus) four years ago or so after a bottle of wine in a bar. In this case it was a Great Wall Merlot, French méthode, delicious, in downtown Beijing.

With me was Mr Luo Xiaoming, chairman of the Beijing Guozheng International Education Investment, a philanthropic, educational reformer and entrepreneur. Together we mused about establishing a network of skills colleges throughout China based on everything that is great in the UK FE system. I was gazing into a crystal ball, seeing a complete U-turn in UK visa restrictions and the need for us to become a capacity-building partner with our overseas markets while we tempted their students to study here.

By the end of the evening we reckoned that we had all we needed to make it happen: the expertise and knowledge of British FE, the ability to lever in resources and investors, political contacts in both countries to support us, a passion and shared excitement for the venture, and Charles Cao Quin, my vice principal international, who was also with us that night and who is the most networked Sino-UK champion you could meet. Most importantly, we realised that we had a deep and fundamental respect and

trust for each other and, vitally, shared values. That night we shook hands on an agreement to work together exclusively — and we have become close friends since.

Nothing much happened to our plans for a couple of years. I moved to Warwickshire College, Charles followed and became "my man in China", based full-time in Beijing, and Xiaoming busied away laying foundations for our joint venture, with highs intermingling with heart-stopping financial losses along the way. But we never doubted that one day the stars would align.

A joint venture between our partnership and Weifang Engineering Vocational College in Qingzhou provided the start that we needed. With its acres of unused land and masses of under-utilised buildings, combined with a genuine commitment to partnership, innovation and shared risk, it seemed the perfect nursery for us to learn how to do things China-UK style.

"The biggest disappointment has been the lack of interest amongst FE and HE partners we approached to help us with this work"

The support of local, provincial and national government has been overwhelming and now we are on target to deliver the best we can offer in purpose-built facilities for up to 20,000 students. With a local population of 900,000 – and 98 million more in the province — there is no fear of under-recruitment. All costs are covered by the partnership and the college receives a healthy proportion of tuition fee income.

Towards the end of this week we will conclude discussions in Shanghai with another partner and so our network of China-UK skills colleges will extend. The biggest disappointment, on the UK side, has been the lack of



From left: Charles Cao Quin, vice principal, Warwickshire College, Luo Xiaoming, chairman, Beijing Guozheng International Education Investment, Xiao Mingsheng, president, Weifang Engineering Vocational College, Mariane Cavalli, principal & ceo, Warwickshire College, Li Ruiyang, deputy mayor, Weifang City, Bernard Doyle, chair of governors, Warwickshire College, Han Xingfu, mayor of Qingzhou City, and Cui Zhaozhong, vice president, Weifang Engineering Vocational College.

interest among the FE and HE partners that we approached to help us with this work. The Chinese education and skills market is almost impenetrable and I was offering a route in. Our mistake was to think it might be of value to local partners.

Fortunately we are proud members of the Gazelle Colleges Group and we look forward to inviting them, and their HE networks, to collaborate with us. This project is limitless and there is much to be gained, on both sides, for all of us.

It's hard to disagree with the Association of Colleges when it says that "colleges are businesses and they need to be business-like". As a founder member of Gazelle I go much further: our principles are that colleges create wealth, form and grow businesses, and focus on employment outcomes. We know that if we want our students to acquire an entrepreneurial mindset, than we too have to live entrepreneurially and we have to lead entrepreneurial colleges. Warwickshire College is walking the talk.

At the opening ceremony at Weifang, I spoke about my own college's entrepreneurial mindset: about my entrepreneurial board that

has really only backed a vision, and has had to wait a long time for me to provide the detail, and about managers and staff at Warwickshire College who know that we have to combine skills and an entirely new set of qualities and characteristics in our students to help them to succeed. I spoke about the need for us to prepare our students for a networked world, with international businesses and global employment opportunities. Most of the rather mature audience sat unmoved, but the students — probably 500 or so — stood; and I watched them applaud their futures.

While we college leaders are balancing ever-mounting funding pressures and policy upheavals, we have to be as innovative and ambitious as possible, just to provide a roof over the heads of our own country's students. FE is business focused, entrepreneurial and innovative.

Enterprises such as overseas partnerships don't necessarily detract from our core business. Far from it. In these challenging times they subsidise it.

Mariane Cavalli, principal and chief executive of Warwickshire College

FE Week Expert

We face challenges, but it's not all gloom

Speakers at the Association of Employment and Learning Providers' (AELP) autumn conference in Leeds addressed a number of issues, including rising apprenticeship numbers and FE loans. Association chief executive Graham Hoyle explains.

The autumn conference of AELP traditionally addresses the immediate challenges facing training organisations in the employment and skills sectors and the event in Leeds was no exception.

We face major challenges, but we are hardly in a position of doom and gloom.

The government announced this month that we had hit the 500,000 landmark in apprenticeship places in England, and it would be churlish not to acknowledge that providers, as well as employers and learners, have benefited from this growth while the economy and other sectors have been in recession.

Providers who are good at employer engagement, and who offer high quality provision, are the ones who should rightly benefit most from increased public investment.

Since Lord Leitch advocated a demand-led skills system in 2006, there has been movement towards a more employer-responsive framework and AELP would not be happy if poor performers who cannot show adequate employer demand were still protected by the funding system.

As institutions of varying levels of performance seek to protect their volumes by contracting out provision, this brings us on to the issue of sub-contracting and the need for good standards in supply chain management.

Training providers of all sizes want subcontracting to continue for bona fide reasons, such as enabling them to spread their provision

into a new region, but it has to be on fair and reasonable terms.

In recent weeks, AELP's Paul Warner has been locked in a room with officials from the Association of Colleges to make this happen; a common accord should be published for consultation by the end of November.

"Our concern has been that loans might seriously affect the take-up of adult apprenticeships and, in particular, higher apprenticeships"

Doug Richard is now putting the finishing touches to his review of apprenticeships and we are hopeful that he will share our view that two million apprenticeships is a perfectly reasonable goal.

Our recent position paper (How to develop, strengthen, improve and increase the number of apprenticeships — downloadable from the AELP website) sets out the steps needed to achieve it.

The conference heard a presentation from the Skills Funding Agency on 24-plus advanced learning loans. Our concern has been that loans might seriously affect the take-up of adult apprenticeships and, in particular, higher



apprenticeships, which the government is especially keen to promote.

The situation will be made worse if ministers don't act quickly to resolve the issue of VAT being added to the fees of independent provider provision, which the loans have to cover.

A completely unjust 20 per cent mark-up will result in many of my members walking away, leaving gaps that will not be filled.

We also covered progress towards greater links between skills and employability programmes, which have grown with the arrival of the youth contract.

The Education Funding Agency explained how its funding was becoming more flexible to enable providers to secure more sustainable job opportunities for young people not in work or training.

And the Department for Work and Pensions presentation addressed the role of Jobcentre

Plus (JCP) in relation to the work programme — AELP members need assurances that more JCP districts are becoming better at making referrals to providers.

On supporting the unemployed back into work, providers are accessing the adult skills budget (ASB) to offer learners pre-employment training.

Smart providers are linking up with work programme contractors to ensure individuals receive joined-up support and increase their chances of sustainable employment.

As the Chancellor's autumn statement approaches, AELP is calling for the ASB to remain a solid source of funding for skills provision for the unemployed as well as for apprenticeships.

Graham Hoyle OBE, chief executive, Association of Employment and Learning Providers

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FE Week campus round-up

Royal visitor at West Nottinghamshire



The Duke of York chats to level 1 plumbing student Lewis Williams, 16.

The Duke of York visited West Nottinghamshire College's Construction and Logistics Skills Academy as part of his on-going effort to recognise and promote excellence in technical education and apprenticeships across the UK.

His Royal Highness took part in a round-table discussion with college principal Asha Khemka OBE, employers and business leaders on the subject of re-engaging and creating jobs for young people.

The Duke of York was then given a tour of the £7.2m construction academy, meeting staff, students, apprentices and employer links during the visit.

In a speech after the tour Prince Andrew said: "The purpose of an institution like this is to bring together work, training, business and life skills."

Mrs Khemka said: "It was an honour to show His Royal Highness how we're developing the next generation of skilled tradespeople through high-quality vocational training and forging strong links with employers."

The skills academy provides training to over 1,300 students on a wide range of vocational courses.



From left student Rachel Wilkinson, 18, college lecturer John Stopforth and student Dave Whitaker, 18

Yorkshire duo help on new video game

It hasn't felt like work for two Yorkshire college students who have spent their internship testing video games.

Doncaster College students Rachel Wilkinson, 18, and Dave Whitaker, 18, have been working on a new game for Sumo Digital at its Sheffield studios. F1 2012 and the Doctor Who adventures are among famous games the company is responsible for.

Rachel and Dave said: "It gave us a great insight into the business and how things worked and confirmed our intention to work in the industry."

John Stopforth, lecturer at the college, said: "The company was very impressed with the students and we got good reports about them. They set a high benchmark and were very professional. They could even get their names on the credits of the new game."

Since the summer, a third student from the same course, Louie Hepworth, has won work experience at the company.

"This was a great opportunity for the college and the three students to be placed in a prestigious company such as Sumo digital," added Mr Stopforth.

Students overcome RAF obstacles

Lancashire students wouldn't let any obstacles get in their way as they helped open a Royal Air Force (RAF) centre in Liverpool.

Blackpool and the Fylde College public service students had to jump over a 10ft wall, tightrope walk and use planks to navigate stepping stones in a demonstration for the launch of the Northwest RAF outreach centre in Aintree.

Among the audience that watched the obstacle course demonstration was the Lord High Mayor of Liverpool, who was joined by army officers and staff from colleges across the region.

One of the 13 students that had to stay cool under pressure was Charlotte Bartlett, 18. She said: "The event went really well and I was pleased we were selected to help to officially open the centre. There was definitely more pressure with lots of people watching us, but we worked really well as a team and communicated well and it was a great experience."



Charlotte Bartlett, 18, tackles the obstacle course at the opening of the RAF's new centre

Alice treads in her boss's footsteps



Student Alice Nixon, 18, and Melanie Squire, owner of Simply Gorgeous Beauty

A beauty therapist has followed her boss's footsteps and reached the UK finals of WorldSkills.

Like her manager, Derby College student Alice Nixon, 18, has won a place in the finals of the international competition, held in Birmingham in November.

The news came just weeks after Alice finished college and started working for Melanie Squire, who won a silver medal in beauty therapy last year.

"I can't believe how lucky I am – to get a job at such a lovely salon and then to reach the finals of WorldSkills," said Alice.

"Because Melanie has gone through the competition route, she knows exactly what I need to do to prepare and has been a huge support."

Melanie, who owns Simply Gorgeous Beauty in Allestree, said she was "extremely proud" of Alice.

The Derby College mentor said: "Having recognised Alice's potential at the college, I offered her a job and was delighted when she accepted. She is such a lovely girl – hard working and consistently high in the quality of her work, which the clients always comment on."

Want your college or training provider to appear on these pages?

Send your stories with pictures to news@feweek.co.uk including names, ages and course of students where applicable

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WorldSkills builds its strengths in Somerset



Joiner David Beattie (right) with SquadUK training manager Andrew Pengelly at Somerset College

The training HQ for SquadUK's five-strong joinery and cabinet-making WorldSkills team has been announced.

Somerset College, in Taunton, will play host to cabinet makers Blake Fewster, from Somerset, George Calloway, from East Sussex, both 20, and Edward Harringman, 19 and from West Sussex.

Joiners Luke Shepherd, 20 and from Somerset, and David Beattie, 21, from Northern Ireland, will also be using the college's "world class" facilities.

Christian Notely, UK squad training

manager for the cabinet making team, said: "In order for these guys to perform at their best, they require world-class workshop facilities."

"We are lucky to have Somerset College available to us, where the equipment and facilities are simply world class."

The talents on show at the WorldSkills competition range from construction-based skills, to hair and beauty, to web design. The next biennial competition takes place in Leipzig, Germany, next year.

Porky pair move on to Eccles campus

Greater Manchester students have welcomed two oinky members to its Eccles campus.

The Oxford sandy and black pigs, Maggie and Esther, are sisters and were brought in from Lincolnshire to help to teach animal management students.

Jennifer Darby, animal management tutor, said students needed to "understand that although an animal can be raised for meat, their quality of life is still vital and should be respected".

The rare pigs are in temporary accommodation while their new enclosure is being built.

Ms Darby said: "The girls have a wonderful temperament and seem more than happy in their new home."



Louise Student Clarice Lowe, 16 with Maggie and Esther

Art and design students sell their wares



Tutor John Nuttall (second from left) with students Molly Woodfield, 18, Mike Merrill, 18, Anna Molony, 17, Servanne Herant, 17, Alex Gill, 17

Creative students got a taste of success when they sold their eye-catching products at a fair in Shropshire.

Bags, postcards and computer graphics were among the homemade products on sale, and a badge-making workshop helped net the art and design students £272.

Terrence Albrecht, 22, was one of 15 South Cheshire College students that sold their work.

He said: "I created digital paintings of various images of people and places which are associated with the town of Whitchurch.

It has been a fun project and I was pleased that my work attracted interest when it went on display."

Laura Sumner, graphic design lecturer, set the students *The Apprentice*-style challenge.

"The students worked really hard and put different elements of their graphic design skills to the test during the project," she said.

"There was a fantastic response from the public who commented on how professional their designs were, students were over the moon after almost selling out of all the products they made."



From left Nigel Lowe, Exeter College tutor; student Bobby Plows, 17, and Kay Hammond, Sprout manager

High Street success for Exeter student

A budding graphic designer's artwork took pride of place on the high street when it was chosen as the logo for a charity shop.

The shop Sprout picked the design of student Bobby Plows, 17, from 12 submissions by first-year graphic students at Exeter College.

"It's great to see my work here being used in such a bold way and for such a great cause," said Bobby.

Sprout has been set up by Emmaus, a charity that helps the homeless. Terry Waite, who was taken hostage for nearly five years in Lebanon in the 1980s, has been patron for 21 years.

In an emotional speech to open the shop, he said: "As a hostage I was in the dark, surviving without comforts and books so I do know what it's like to be at the sharp end of life.

"Emmaus encourages people to leave state support and work as companions according to their capacity and eventually, through work and regaining their dignity, it helps people to get back into normal life.

"This most elegant and designed shop will raise awareness of Emmaus and raise funds for us to set up a community here in Exeter."

Cath Kidston takes on her first apprentice

The homeware shop Cath Kidston has teamed up with a Kent college to launch its first apprenticeship scheme.

Ruby Streek, 16, from Faversham, became the high street store's first apprentice when she began a retail skills qualification at Canterbury College.

Ruby, who has been working at Cath Kidston's Canterbury branch since the start of September, has been learning about everything from advising customers to creating sales-boosting shop displays.

"This is great for me because when I left school I couldn't choose whether to go to college or get a full-time job. Being able to do a few days at college and apply it to the workplace really appealed to me," said Ruby.

"I feel a level of responsibility to live up to knowing I'm Cath Kidston's first apprentice but it's going well and I'm enjoying it," she added.



Student Ruby Streek, 16, at Cath Kidston for her apprenticeship

Minister takes a spin lesson in Sheffield



It's lesson number one for many politicians, but FE Minister Matthew Hancock has just had his first class on spin.

He visited Sheffield City College's staff and students and took the opportunity to get a few pointers on spun sugar techniques.

The MP tried his hand alongside 19 of the college's patisserie students during his visit to the Granville Road campus, part of The Sheffield College, on October 3.

"I was delighted to visit Sheffield City College which gave me a great insight into how a successful college should be run. It was also a chance for me to pick up a new skill and I really enjoyed learning to spin sugar with catering students," he said.

FE Week event report

Skills Show final preparations



Artist impression of the Skills Show opening ceremony, using a photo from the WorldSkills London 2011 opening ceremony, taken by Nick Linford

Holly Welham

[@hollywelham](https://twitter.com/hollywelham)

Television stars and Olympic medallists are expected to be among the crowds flooding to the first Skills Show in Birmingham next month.

Hundreds of youngsters will be competing for medals in more than 50 skills, from mobile robotics and nail art, to landscape gardening and bricklaying.

Covering nine football pitches, the three-day show at the NEC in Birmingham will be kicked off by The One Show presenter Angelica Bell, who's hosting the opening ceremony at the LG Arena. Circus acrobatics, Indian drumming and break dancing will also entertain the audience, and the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) will announce the winners of its apprenticeship and training awards. Will Best, presenter of E4's Love Shaft, is booked to host the closing ceremony.

David Way, chief executive of NAS, said: "There are so many wins with the Skills Show: for employers, training providers, colleges and of course students. As a country we need to grab hold of events such as this. The more people that we get involved with these skills' competitions the greater the benefit to students and ultimately to the UK."

"WorldSkills international in London last year was a spectacular showcase of talent and expertise. The Skills Show next month will be an opportunity for some of the most talented young people to showcase their talents. When I walk around skills competitions I am always impressed by the level of expertise that I see first-hand. I'm looking forward to visiting."

The event is the first of three annual Skills Shows to mark the legacy of the international WorldSkills competition held in London last year. Billed as the Olympic of skills, more than 200,000 people came to the capital to see young

people from 51 countries and regions compete in their chosen skill.

As well as watching competitors battle it out for a WorldSkills UK medal, the expected 100,000 visitors can try their hand at "Have a Go" activities, including welding with chocolate, building miniature planes and learning how to develop an app for the iPhone.

The celebration from November 15 to 17 will welcome 1,500 schools and colleges from across the UK. Students will give demonstrations of skills as diverse as using theatrical make-up and prosthetics to transform someone into a lion, to explaining with props how flies can be used to find out how long a person has been dead.

During the first two days, visitors can attend conferences from three organisations. On Nov 14 the Commission for Employment and Skills will showcase businesses that lead "ambitious" skills projects and explore "innovative solutions" for employers. And Business in the Community will bring together business leaders and young people to share ideas about how companies can transform their experience into "work inspiration". Delegates will also have the chance to get a behind the scenes tour of the show.

On Nov 15 The Edge Foundation will present research into technical and vocational education on "why it matters, what works and where we go from here". Experts will discuss the latest evidence with educators and policy makers. The programme includes a keynote speech by Sir John Armitt, chairman of the Olympic Delivery Authority, who will discuss "the challenges that lie ahead and how we should tackle them".

On Nov 16 the annual WorldSkills UK Alumni Awards will be held at a reception to celebrate the "ongoing contribution to vocational and practical learning" made by former competitors.

This event will take place before The Skills

Show closing ceremony where gold medals will be presented to WorldSkills UK national competition winners. A new medal has been specially designed for the ceremony by Jonathan Cleave, who won a medallion for excellence in graphic design when he competed for Team UK at WorldSkills London 2011.

Spotlight sessions will also take place over the three days and feature more than 100 speakers, including hockey bronze medallist Sally Walton, 400m relay gold medallist Phil Brown, and ex-chef to Andrew Lloyd Webber, Alan Bird.

The Apprentice contestant Nick Holzherr, who made the finals of Lord Sugar's reality programme, is one of the famous faces giving a session.

He told *FE Week* that events such as the Skills Show were "really worthwhile" because they encourage people to consider different jobs.

"It's all about ambition and helping people find their direction," he said. "The Skills Show will inspire young people to set their own business up or go for a certain job. It will give them a real drive to do that. They may become one of the leaders in our society — what a fantastic achievement."

After leaving The Apprentice he set up his own business, Whisk, which creates online shopping lists based on recipes. He told the paper what he'll pass on to budding entrepreneurs.

"It's about initiative and perseverance. The key thing is action. It's about trying — you can sit there and theoretically think about different things forever. The way I do things is to actually try it out. At our business if we have an idea about how something should work, or a disagreement among different people, the best way to solve it is to actually try the different methods and see which one works best," he said.

Ross Maloney, the event's chief executive, said: "The Skills Show will be an unrivalled

skills experience to inspire the future stars of tomorrow.

"We want thousands of young people, their parents, guardians, educators and employers to visit The Skills Show and be inspired by the highly skilled apprentices and young people in action, as well as trying new skills for themselves and receiving the latest career advice to help them make informed choices about the future."



More than 200 top employers, training companies, learning providers, industry associations, sector skills councils, colleges, universities and higher education institutions will be exhibiting

The show will:

- cover the equivalent of nine football pitches
- use 200 tons of equipment
- include 50,000 square metres of exhibition space
- have 100,000 visitors, including 70,000 young people from over 1,500 schools and colleges



Dhol Crew "the future of Indian", will be performing at this year's opening ceremony.



Birmingham's Rhythm Junkiez will also perform at this year's opening ceremony.



Ownership of the Skills Show

The Skills Show is a joint initiative supported by the National Apprenticeship Service, the Skills Funding Agency and WorldSkills UK – The Skills Show Limited.

City & Guilds is a Premier Sponsor and the European Social Fund is a partner of WorldSkills UK – The Skills Show.



Nick Holzherr runner up on BBC One's The Apprentice will take part in a Spotlight session.

A word from competitor Heather Peach

One of the hundreds of young people competing for a medal at the Skills Show is Heather Peach. The 18-year-old, who won gold at WorldSkills UK in Ireland last year, will be fighting for another gold in electronic engineering. The Wigan and Leigh College student is in her third year of a four-year apprenticeship at MDBA, a company that develops missile and defence systems.

Why did you decide to do an apprenticeship?

When I was at high school a couple of MBDA apprentices gave a talk to my class. It gave me the opportunity to see what I could do away from a very traditional path. I had never considered an apprenticeship, but after the talk I picked up an application form, applied, and two years later here I am.

It gave me the idea that the job existed. I had quite common perception that apprenticeships are for things like bricklaying, building, and plastering, and they're not. You can do an apprenticeship in practically anything and that's what it opened my eyes to.

Competing in the skills competitions has also made me realise how many different types of apprenticeships there are.

Why is the Skills Show important?

The biggest thing for me is young people coming and seeing they can do and achieve anything they like. They don't have to do what their parents want them to do, what their teachers think they should do, they can do anything.

I was told that I should go to university, I should do this, I should do that, but you shouldn't be told that. You should be asked 'what do you want to be and we'll make that happen'.

Going to WorldSkills in London last year to support MDBA competitors opened my eyes that I could pass that message on to young people. It inspired me. Also, it inspires employers for what they can do to help bring apprentices in.



Skills competing

Skills competing at the show

Accounting Technician

Aeronautical engineering: Avionic

Aeronautical engineering: Mechanical

Afro-Caribbean Hairdressing

Architectural Stained Glass

Aromatherapy

Autobody Repair

Automobile Technology

Automotive Glazing

Beauty Therapy

Bricklaying

Cabinet Making

Car Painting

Caring

Carpentry

Cisco network Technician

CNC Milling

CNC Turning

Construction Metal Works

Electrical Installation

Enterprise

Environmental Science

Floristry

Game Design

Hairdressing

Heating & Ventilation

Industrial Control

Industrial Electronics

IT security

Joinery

Landscape gardening

Mechanical Engineering: CAD

Mechatronics

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FE Week event report

Ofqual consult on ESOL changes

Natalie Tremlett

@natalietremlett

Uncertainty around funding, new courses and immigration rules were the hot topics of debate at a conference on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

Ian Dexter, reform officer at the qualifications regulator Ofqual, kicked off the fully-booked event with a presentation on proposed changes to ESOL qualifications.

He told the audience at London's Morley College how Ofqual was concerned about internal assessments and how, in 2010/11, it investigated 87 ESOL centres over fears of malpractice.

It is also proposing a new qualification — provisionally called ESOL for Life in the UK — that would be externally assessed, in a bid to address assessment concerns.

Mr Dexter told the Lsect-organised conference that Ofqual had also been in talks with the Home Office about how to ensure the qualification would comply with immigration rules.

Mr Dexter said: "The new qualification would allow awarding organisations to demonstrate more clearly how students achieving their qualifications can meet the language requirements needed for UK entry, settlement and citizenship."

However, one delegate said the proposal was "like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut", and that the providers who cause concern should be addressed individually.

Mr Dexter said Ofqual's 2010/11 investigations, "suggested there was a deeper issue with internal assessment".



"We should regulate to minimise incentives for malpractice," he said.

He urged delegates to have their say on the proposals by responding to the online consultation by December 3.

Chris Taylor, ESOL programme manager at NIACE, also spoke on new UK settlement rules.

She told of applicants seeking settlement in the UK used to have to pass either the government's Life in the UK test or achieve an ESOL qualification at entry levels one, two or three.

But new regulations, said Ms Taylor, due to be introduced in 2013, would require applicants to pass both an ESOL entry level three qualification and the Life in the UK test.

"Some providers will therefore have to cater at three levels of ESOL qualification where

they previously only accommodated one".

"Will you be able to accommodate new enrolments on top of learners that will stay with you, or will some displacement be inevitable? Some providers will be looking at twice as many enrolments as before, and this has huge implications for workforce development, staffing and curriculum planning".

A subsequent discussion on the implications for both providers and students divided delegates on whether the new rules would have a positive impact on learners' integration into the UK, or whether they would be unachievable for those with low levels of literacy in their first language.

Additional concerns were raised about how ESOL entry levels one to three only test

speaking and listening ability, but learners seeking settlement in the UK under the new proposals will also require reading and computer literacy to pass the online Life in the UK test.

Others to address the conference included Judy Kirsh, co-chair of the National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults, who talked about uncertainties surrounding ESOL teaching qualifications, and Jennifer Turner, head of ESOL and literacy at Greenwich Community College, who considered ways in which to plan the ESOL curriculum.

Nick Linford, Lsect managing director and *FE Week* editor, outlined planned Skills Funding Agency changes for the 2013/14 academic year, due to published in full January.

Ofqual

Consultation on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Qualifications

September 2012
Ofqual/12/5209

Proposed Approach

ESOL for life in the UK (working title)

Consult on draft additional regulations which specify 100% external assessment

Verification of identity of each student at every assessment

Curriculum coverage and levels

Titling

Identified public interest in tightly defining qualification

Need for external assessment and verification to reduce malpractice

Ofqual

Q&A with Chris Taylor, NIACE

What are the new regulations for settlement in the UK?

The UKBA announced in June their statement of intent on family migration, and as part of that they outlined how they will be changing the routes to how applicants can gain settlement in the UK. From September 2013, an ESOL entry level qualification will no longer be sufficient for settlement; instead, both an entry level three ESOL qualification will be required and passing the online Life in the UK test.

These regulations aren't quite set in stone – I'm always optimistic that there's a little bit of room for manoeuvre. It's always worth working with government and putting forward logical, rational proposals that may make small changes. However, it's not a consultation – the Home Office is clear it's a statement of intent.

What do you believe the motivation is for these new rules?

That's a very good question — in the statement of intent there is no explicit reasoning for the changes. They do mention the importance of learning English when living in the UK, which no-one can argue with, and they also mention concerns around assessment malpractice, but whether there are other motivations, we can't tell.

What are the possible implications of the changes for both ESOL providers and learners?

The new regulations will be raising the bar in a big way. Many ESOL students have never been to school in their own country, so won't have the learning skills we take for granted in the UK. To achieve entry level three means they're going to have to keep paying for their courses, and they'll have to work very hard to achieve what's actually a pretty high level of English.

All that on top of settling into a new country, bringing up a family, trying to find a job, and you can imagine how difficult that must be for learners.

Learners having to achieve entry level three could mean a lot more students for providers, and more students struggling to achieve the required level. Passing the Life in the UK test in addition to ESOL entry level three will also have an impact, as although providers do not explicitly have to teach or assess reading and computer literacy, these skills will be needed for learners. They're not only going to have to be able to converse in English, but also to understand written questions, and answer these on a computer. I think it will be tough call for quite a lot of students.

What can providers do to prepare for the changes?

All ESOL providers have got to plan ahead. It's essential they look at their student attendance patterns, to see whether the students they

recruit at entry level one tend to stay for all three levels or whether they come and go.

This will help providers guess how their student intake will change following the introduction of the new regulations. I've got a sense that it differs greatly between providers, because it depends on the cohort of students—where they're from and why they're learning English.

There are all kinds of variables providers need to look at. But certainly ESOL managers and curriculum managers really need to plan this as it might mean a small change, or it might mean a very significant change and therefore a great impact on staffing and resources.

Can you tell us more about Ofqual's investigations into assessment malpractice?

The ESOL Skills for Life qualifications were developed in 2003, and were originally just certificates to demonstrate language skills. In 2005, the Home Office introduced new legislation about how people could achieve citizenship, including the introduction of the citizenship test. The alternative route to the online test was to complete an entry level ESOL qualification, which was a great idea, as those that were in the process of learning English, but did not have the capabilities to do the online test, still had the chance to gain citizenship.

Unfortunately there were people out there who saw an opportunity to make money—and so some private providers were set up to cash in on ESOL. These centres would register with awarding bodies, but ones that only used internal assessment.

They were advertising very expensive weekend courses and at the end would offer the learner a low level exam that they'd pass very easily. The students didn't actually need to take the course itself, and the providers would walk away with a lot of money. In some cases the students knew what was going on, but took the opportunity as they knew it was a route to citizenship, but other students really didn't know what was going in.

In some cases the providers just took the money and did a runner – we had cases of students calling us with horror stories of paying £500 for nothing.

Do you think there is a problem with internal assessment of ESOL and if so, how should this be tackled?

There is an issue, but assessment malpractice is certainly an exception not the rule. It was a tiny minority of private providers – only 87 that Ofqual investigated – out of hundreds of individual ESOL centres. That's what many people we speak to are concerned about, as although no-one can deny there's been some



malpractice, these reforms will affect all providers, despite it being a good qualification that is in most cases delivered successfully.

I think the Home Office is absolutely set in changing this qualification – but one of the alternative ideas to combat malpractice is to regulate more closely or to close down providers of concern.

It seems to me like changing the qualification because of a minority of centres not delivering it properly is a bit like throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Do you think the consultation will have any real influence on the proposals?

I think it will have an effect and it's very important that loads of people respond to it. At NIACE we made our initial public response in September 2011, on the first day the consultation went live.

We will also publish our final formal response before it closes. Once the consultation is closed the awarding bodies will have a really short time to develop any new qualification, as they are set to go live by September 2013.

That doesn't seem enough time to deliver a really robust qualification, as in nine months they'll need to develop, pilot, revise and test again before it's ready to be introduced properly.



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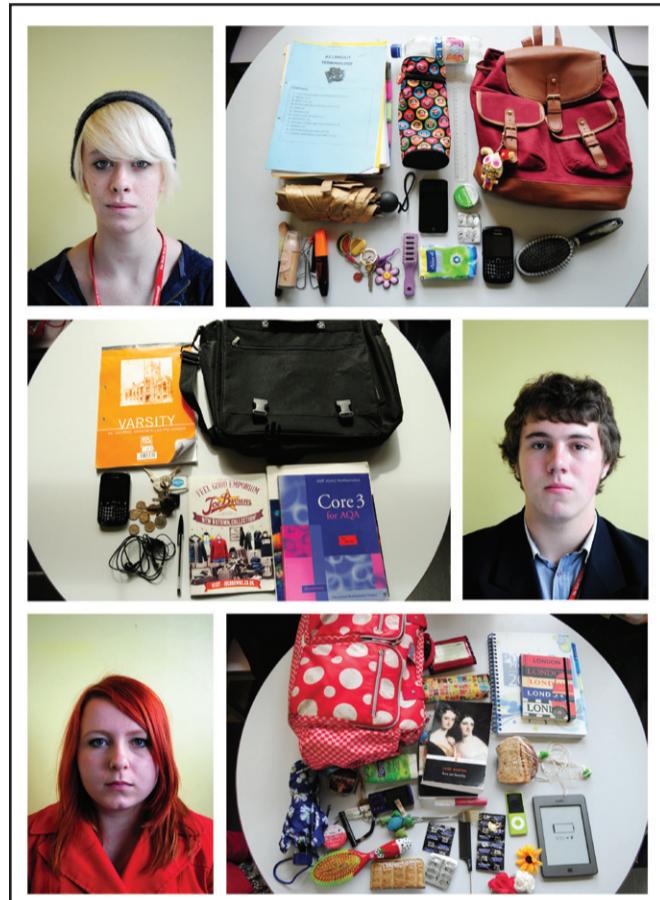


We are pleased to announce the shortlist for the FE Week and Me photography competition 2012.

We asked learners to send in one photo of their choosing that depicted the start of the college year and what college means to them. The winning student will win a Nikon D5100 Camera kit (worth £700) and £500 to be the official FE Week photographer at our charity auction. A separate competition will be run for students not studying photography, who will win £500 in vouchers of their choosing.

After receiving nearly 300 entries we selected the cream of the crop and now it's over to you to make the final decision.

To see the full short-list and cast your vote by 5 November please go to: www.surveymonkey.com/s/feweekandme



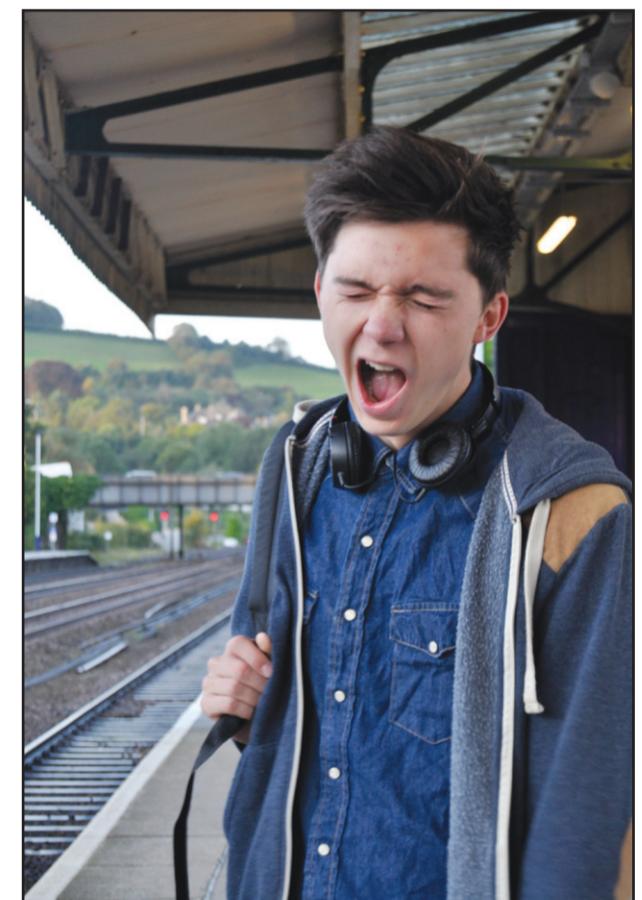
Bags, faces, friends

Lewis Shaw, Farnborough Sixth Form College. For me college is all about the people you get to meet. You go to college every morning not knowing who you're going to meet, what they look like, what they carry in their bags, and what all those things tell you about them. This photo explores that idea.



Head in books

Tyrone Williams, Leicester College. The learning possibilities are endless.



Nathaniel 7:52am

Gloria Munson, Exeter College. YAWN: To open the mouth wide with a deep inhalation, usually involuntarily from drowsiness, fatigue, or boredom.



Independence corrupting the innocent

Lily Stephanie Beatrice Holt, Chichester College. College is about concentrating on everything important to you. Opportunity of experiencing love, lust, sex and raunchiness that in an educational place you don't associate but we're young adults creating ourselves, finding out who we are and who we're not. You're surrounded by people, there's moments you still feel alone.



Picture this...

Nicole Keeley, City College Norwich. This picture represents college life for me primarily as I am a photography student but mostly as college, for me, is about being able to do the thing I love and be surrounded by people who share the same passion and ambitions as me.

**FE, your next step... by choice**

Louis Tierney, Huntingdon Regional College. College is unique, may it be photography, art or music that defines you. School is dull, ordered and creates the feeling of wearing a harness, but if you persevere and go to college, you will understand that you have made the first real step into defining you as a person.

**Now is what counts!**

Taz Maguire, Leicester College. When you choose to study something you love, it stops being school and starts becoming something much bigger. The people around you are the ones who help you develop and grow within that subject, and it's those same people that give you the boost of confidence to push the boundaries.

**A teenager's day**

Zackery Langdon, Truro and Penwith College. These sunglasses reflect a typical college student in the summer. The left section shows the revision aspect, when a teenager is at home stressed by all of the work. The other section to the right is an average teenager showing off to a camera on the way to college.

**Shelf worm**

Alexander Gray, Leicester College. A lot of time is spent reading books and researching specific artists, and I wanted to represent my expression through this image.

**Chronically sleepless**

Katherine Hardiman, Exeter College. Overworked, overtired, overstressed. 19-20 hours a day. That's how many hours I spend awake mediating my social life and workload. Sleep deprivation is the key aspect of college for me and although I enjoy college, it drains my energy completely.

**A perfect moment**

Catherine Turner, Exeter College. It was taken without warning, a few people were aware it was being taken but it was completely natural. It represents the important role friends play in my time and experience at college. It shows a beautiful happy moment with a real sense of the freedom that college gives you.

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Quality & Standards
c.£65k

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FE Week Sudoku challenge

	9		4		1			
		6		5				
2	8	1		7	6	3		
5		4		6		9		
4							6	
7		2		8		1		
4	3	8		1	7	5		
	7		4					
7		3		8				

Difficulty:
EASY

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

Solutions: Next week

	1				6			
				5				2
6	3	8		2	7			
8	9		3		2			
	4		8					
2		9		3	4			
5	1		4	8				3
3		6						
	1				7			

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Last Week's solutions

6	9	1	7	3	4	2	5	8
8	3	5	2	9	6	4	7	1
2	4	7	1	8	5	6	9	3
9	5	8	6	2	7	1	3	4
7	6	4	8	1	3	9	2	5
3	1	2	4	5	9	8	6	7
5	2	9	3	4	1	7	8	6
4	7	3	9	6	8	5	1	2
1	8	6	5	7	2	3	4	9

Difficulty:
EASY

2	3	7	8	9	5	1	6	4
4	6	9	1	2	3	7	5	8
1	8	5	4	7	6	9	3	2
6	7	8	5	4	1	2	9	3
3	5	2	7	8	9	4	1	6
9	4	1	6	3	2	5	8	7
5	2	4	3	1	8	6	7	9
7	1	3	9	6	4	8	2	5
8	9	6	2	5	7	3	4	1

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

FE Week mini-mascot

Follow the adventures of *FE Week's* biggest and smallest fan!



"Mostly this week I have been feeding pigeons, but eating most of the bread myself"

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